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SUBJECT: PRC AMBASSADOR DESCRIBES PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO CHINA

REF: 05 MASERU 0478

¶1. (U) During a January 19 donor meeting, PRC Ambassador to Lesotho Qiu Bohua gave a brief readout of Prime Minister Mosisili's official visit to China Nov. 30 to Dec. 6, 2005. Qiu noted that it was the Prime Minister's second trip to the PRC and that Mosisili had accepted China's invitation to attend the Sino-Africa Cooperation Summit in Beijing in November 2006.

¶2. (U) Qiu described the visit in strongly positive terms. Mosisili had met the President of China, Speaker of the National Assembly, and toured the Three Gorges Dam. Official talks covered bilateral cooperation, UNSC reform, development issues. The PRC had reaffirmed its support for Lesotho's "development and stability," while Mosisili reiterated the GOL's backing of the One China Policy.

¶3. (U) As a result of Lesotho's request for more economic investment and development aid, Qiu said that during Mosisili's visit the PRC had promised to:

- Provide 1 million USD for purchasing food;
- Provide 30 million Yuan for a development project to be designated by the GOL;
- Build a new Lesotho Parliament building;
- Provide more investment in textiles and agriculture. (Qiu added that technical teams would come to Lesotho first to do feasibility studies to determine the most suitable type of investments.)

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: The trip and the financial assistance provided by the PRC are the latest examples of China's growing presence in Lesotho. As noted inref, the PRC has provided some equipment to the Lesotho Defense Force, built the new National Library and Archives facility, plus a convention center, and agreed to finance a substantial upgrade of Lesotho's television and radio broadcast system. Many high-ranking GOL high-ranking officials have made official trips to the PRC. The Parliament project was a long time coming -- and may be delayed further. The GOL had approached all of the bilateral donors to sound out financing possibilities. None were interested at first, but after a considerable period of time, China decided to assist. Terms of the agreement require the GOL to provide all of the infrastructure for the rather remote site (located on a hill top away from the center of the city), including an access road, before building construction begins. Despite China's deep pockets, the general perception among Lesotho of China and Chinese is decidedly mixed: "Chinese" (whether from the PRC or Taiwan) can be seen as clannish, culturally insensitive, and taking business opportunities away from Basotho (ref).

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